



Tip of the

Prevention Information from CSAP's Western Center for the Application of Prevention Technologies

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Prevention with Older Adults

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Recently there has been a growing awareness of the value of substance abuse prevention in the older adult population. The later years of life can bring an increased risk for medication and alcohol-related problems. The 77 million "baby boomers" born in the U.S. following World War II are just now beginning to turn 55. By the year 2020, close to 20% (70 million) will be over the age of 65 – that's twice the population of this group today. These "boomers" are expected to bring higher substance misuse and abuse prevalence rates.

As people age, they consume more prescribed and over-the-counter medications. Persons over the age of 65 consume more medications than any other age group in the United States. Thirty percent of these individuals take eight or more prescription drugs daily. A large share of prescriptions for older adults are psychoactive, mood changing drugs that carry the potential for misuse, abuse or dependency. As many as 17% of older adults are affected by alcohol and/or prescription drug misuse.

Education programs are being designed and implemented to equip older adults with information vital to understanding substance misuse/abuse. In addition to providing basic information, effective prevention programs must address the attitudes, values, relationships, environmental factors and social relationships that characterize the lives of older adults.

CSAP recently announced its Aging Strategic Plan to address substance use and mental health issues facing older adults. This plan focuses on preventing substance use problems throughout the lifespan, and seeks to increase awareness among providers, caregivers, and the public about older adults' diverse and multiple needs. CSAP's current initiatives include:

- Analyzing prescription drug data to identify older adults at greatest risk for substance abuse problems (Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey)
- Creating a framework of risk and protective factors
- Developing promising practices guide and tool kit with National Council on the Aging (NCOA) for service providers
- Working with State substance abuse prevention leaders to stimulate State policy, program and funding

CSAP offers two related courses in its Prevention Pathways Online Courses at:

www.samhsa.gov/preventionpathways/courses/index/htm

- Alcohol, Medication and Older Adults
- At Any Age, It Does Matter

The American Society on Aging has a web site on alcohol, other drugs and older adults:

www.asaging.org/aod.

To bridge the gap between older adults and the mental health and substance abuse services they may need, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the National Council on Aging, Inc. (NCOA) recently partnered to develop a publication: Promoting Older Adult Health: Aging Network Partnerships to Address Medication, Alcohol and Mental Health Problems. It is available at the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information at: 1-800-729-6686. Refer to inventory number BKD 447.

The six regional CAPTs are funded by the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention in the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. For more information on this Tip of the CAPT or other Western CAPT services, please visit our web site: **www.westcapt.org** or our best practices website: **www.open.org/westcapt**.

Our toll-free office number is: (888) 734-7476